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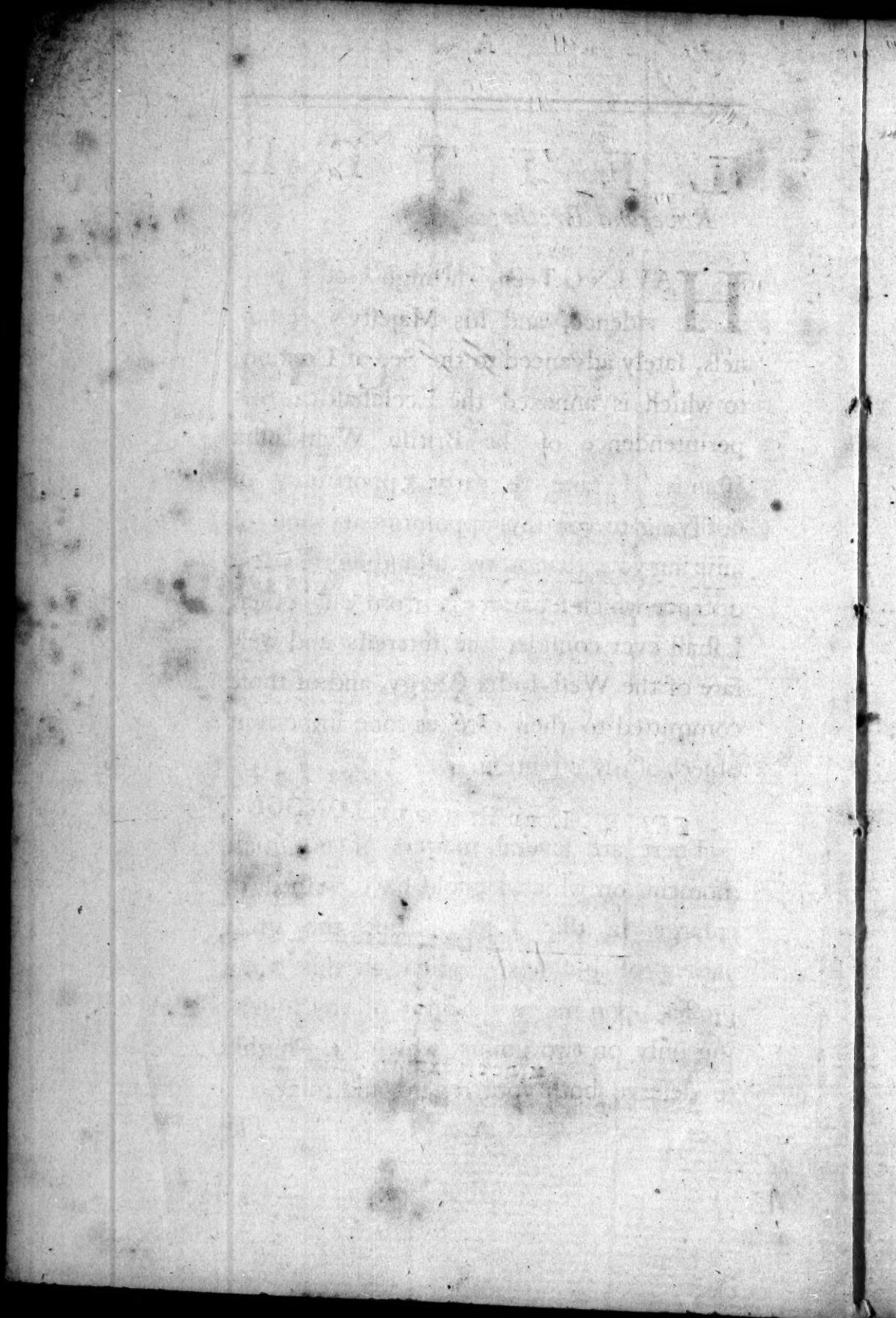
LETTER
TO THE
CLERGY
OF THE
WEST-INDIA ISLANDS,

BY

BEILBY, LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

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Reverend Brethren,

HAVING been, through God's providence, and his Majesty's goodness, lately advanced to the See of London, to which is annexed the Ecclesiastical Superintendence of the British West-India Islands; I take an early opportunity of notifying to you this appointment; and of assuring you, that, notwithstanding the great distance which separates us from each other, I shall ever consider the interests and welfare of the West-India Clergy, and of those committed to their care, as one important object of my attention.

There are several matters of no small moment, on which I could have wished to enlarge in this Letter; but the great variety of business, which at this time presses upon me, will admit of my touching only on two points, which seem highly to deserve both your regard and mine.

The first is, *The instruction of the Negro Slaves in the principles of Morality and Religion.* Compassion, justice, christian charity, evidently require this kind office at our hands, towards those who, though they are of a different colour, are of the same nature with ourselves; created by the same God; descended of the same common parents, under the protection of the same Almighty Governour of the world; and equally entitled to the benefits and the promises of that Gospel which was intended to bring salvation to all men, and, by the express command of its divine Author, was to be preached to every creature.

I am aware, that there may have been considerable difficulties in the way of this benevolent work; but these are, I trust, less formidable now than formerly, and certainly not insuperable. I am aware, that an undertaking of this nature must add greatly to the labour of those Ministers who have large and populous parishes to take care of: yet a few hours might, I hope,

hope, be spared even by these, especially on a Sunday evening, for this most charitable purpose; and, in fact, I am informed, that some of the most respectable Parochial Clergymen in the Islands have actually so employed a part of the Lord's Day. A little time, well spent, would go a great way in opening the understandings of these poor Heathens, and sowing in their hearts the seeds of eternal life: it would be a labour truly evangelical; it would be treading closely in the steps of your Blessed Master, who came on purpose (as he himself tells us) *to preach the gospel to the poor:* and where shall we find such a number of human beings collected together, so strictly entitled to that appellation, in every possible sense of the word, as the Negro Slaves in the West-India Islands? Most of them would, no doubt, be truly thankful to you for this attention to them: their Masters would, I am perswaded, not only allow it, but assist you in it: for it is certainly their interest, in every point of view, that their Slaves should be made good Christians.

The Gospel enjoins every one to be content with that state of life to which it hath pleased God to call him; to be faithful, honest, sober, and diligent in business. It enjoins servants of all kinds, and Slaves among the rest, to be *obedient to their masters, and to please them well in all things; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* The Negroes, therefore, that are carefully instructed in these duties, and are taught to perform them under pain of God's displeasure, and future punishment, must evidently be much more valuable and useful to their Owners, than those who are utterly ignorant of the precepts and the sanctions of religion. And, in fact, it is found by experience, (especially in the Island of Antigua, where the Moravian Missionaries have converted several thousands of Negroes), that the Slaves who have embraced Christianity, are much better men, and better labourers, than those who still remain in a state of Heathenism. For these reasons, therefore, as well as for many others still more important, you have good ground to hope for
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the concurrence and support of the Planters, in this benevolent undertaking. Should any additional labourers be hereafter found necessary in this extensive harvest, means may perhaps be found of procuring them: and, in the mean while, though you will probably have no pecuniary recompence for this increase of duty, yet you will have, what is above all price, the applause of your own minds, and the approbation of that all-seeing and righteous Judge who will crown these your voluntary and gratuitous labours with a ten-fold portion of glory hereafter.

To this heavenly reward, one excellent Man amongst you, is not long since gone; I mean the late Rector of St. Thomas, in Barbadoes, Mr. DUKE. This pious and exemplary Pastor gave up a large portion of his time to the instruction of the Negroes in his parish: he instituted a Lecture for the sole purpose of instructing them on Sunday evenings: he composed a set of plain, useful, and practical Discourses, which he then read to them, and of which a large number

number of copies are sent to the Islands, with this Letter. These Discourses I earnestly recommend to your perusal; after which, you will, I am persuaded, think with me, that they are admirably adapted to the end for which they are designed; and that you cannot do better than make the same use of them in your respective parishes, than the pious Author of them did in his.

It would greatly facilitate the religious instruction of the Slaves, if a School for the young Negroes was established in every parish. In these Schools they might, at one and the same time, be taught to read, and trained up, also, in the principles and the duties of the Christian Religion. This would be a much easier task, than the conversion of the grown Negroes from Africa; though even that I conceive to be far from impossible. The expence of such Schools would be trifling to a whole parish, especially if they were of the nature of SUNDAY-SCHOOLS in this country, which are supported

ported at a very trifling expence to each individual.

I had much more to say to you on this interesting subject; but I must reserve it for another opportunity, and hasten to the other point I had to mention to you: it relates to *Candidates for orders from the West-India Islands.* When those who are to officiate in the West-Indies, offer themselves to me for ordination; if they are natives of this country, or have resided in it for any considerable time, it will generally be in my power to obtain a pretty accurate knowledge of their real characters; and you may rest assured, that if I am not deceived by false attestations (which, even after the utmost care and circumspection, will sometimes happen) no unworthy man shall ever be ordained, and sent by me to the West-Indies. But, in general, I apprehend, that those who look towards preferment in the West-Indies, and apply here for ordination with

with that view, are natives, or inhabitants of those islands: and in this case it must, sometimes, be extremely difficult, on account of the distance, to arrive at an exact knowledge of the Candidate's past life and conversation. One of the usual methods of obtaining this information, is the Testimonial he is always expected to bring with him, from three beneficed Clergymen in the island to which he belongs, who have been personally acquainted with him for the three last years. What I have therefore to request of you is, that you would be extremely careful in signing such Testimonials for orders; and that you will never consider them, as what they certainly are not, *mere matters of form.* For your better direction in this matter, I have subjoined the proper form of the Testimonial required. From this you will perceive, that when you set your hand to a Testimonial, you testify that the person whom you recommend, has, for three years past, *lived piously, soberly, and honestly, and applied himself diligently*

gently to his studies: and you testify this, not merely from hear-say, from report, from slight and casual information; but from a *personal knowledge of the Candidate during that whole time*; and, what is still more, you declare that *you do in your consciences think him a person worthy to be admitted into the Ministry of the Church*. These certainly are, if any thing can be, attestations of the utmost moment, and not be given without the most serious consideration, and the most sacred regard to truth.

Trusting, therefore, that you will have the goodness to comply with my wishes, respecting both the points I have here mentioned to you, I pray God to take you into his protection, and am

Your faithful Friend,

and Brother,

B. LONDON.

*London,
April 2, 1788.*

POSTSCRIPT.

FORM of a LETTER TESTIMONIAL for Holy Orders.

*To the Right Reverend Father in God,
BEILBY, by divine permission, Lord Bishop
of London.*

*WHEREAS our beloved in Christ, A. B.
hath declared unto us his intention of offering
himself a candidate for the holy order of
Deacons; and for that end hath requested of
us a Letter Testimonial of his life and be-
haviour: we, therefore, whose names are
hereunto subscribed, do certify, from our
personal knowledge of the life and behaviour
of the said A. B. for the space of three years
last past, and upwards, that he hath, during
that time, lived piously, soberly, and honestly;
applied himself diligently to his studies; and
(as far as we know or believe) has never
written, or maintained, any thing contrary to
the doctrine or discipline of the Church of
England:*

England: and, moreover, we think him a person worthy to be admitted into the holy order of Deacons (or Priests).

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands, the Day of in the year of our Lord, &c.

A. B. *Rector of*

C. D. *Rector of*

E. F. *Rector of*

Besides this Testimonial, the Candidate must bring with him,

1st, A certificate of his baptism, extracted from the Parish Register;

2dly, A recommendation from the Governour, and an appointment to some vacant benefice; and,

3dly, A written paper called a *Si quis*; that is a certificate, that publication was made

made in the parish-church where the Candidate resides, of his intention to offer himself for Holy Orders.

This publication must be made by the Minister of the parish, in the time of divine service, on three successive Sundays; and must be signed by the Minister, Church-warden, and three or four of the most respectable Inhabitants.

The FORM of the SI QUIS, or CERTIFICATE, is as follows:

WHEREAS A. B. of this parish, intends to offer himself a Candidate for the holy order of Deacons (or Priests), at the ordination to be held by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London; this is to give notice, That if any person can show sufficient cause, just impediment, or notable crime, for which the said A. B. ought not to be admitted to that holy order, he may now declare the same, and give notice of it, by letter, to the Bishop of London.

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The above Notice was publicly read in the parish-church of in the Island of during the time of divine service, on Sunday the Sunday the and Sunday the of 1788; and no objections were made.

<i>Witnesses</i>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> C. D. Rector E. F. Churchwarden G. H. I. K. L. M. </div> <div style="flex: 1; text-align: right;"> Inhabitants </div> </div>
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And, as Candidates for orders, at so great a distance, may not know what course of reading is necessary to prepare them for examination, I will recommend to their perusal the following books among others:

Pearson on the Creed.

Secker's Lectures on the Catechism.

Secker's Charges.

Grotius de Veritate Religionis Christianæ.

Beattie on the Evidences of Christianity.

Burnet's Exposition of the 39 Articles.

Burnet's

Burnet's Pastoral Care.

Wheatly on the Common Prayer.

*The Four Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles
(at the least), in the Original Greek,
with some good Comment.*

These books I mention only as the plainest, and most easy to be met with; not as containing all the knowledge that is requisite, but the *very lowest degree* of it that can be admitted in a Candidate for orders.

F I N I S.